FROM HORNET BANK TO CULLIN-LA-RINGO

by Gordon Reid

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Just after the full moon had set early on 27 October 1857, Aborigines entered a darkened homestead on the Dawson River, Central Queensland, and killed all the men, except one who was knocked unconscious and left for dead. Then they induced the women and children outside and, after some deliberation, raped the three eldest and killed them all.

The station family's name was Fraser and the tribe blamed for the attack was later known as the Jiman. The place was Hornet Bank sheep station, 30 miles west of Taroom. Among the 11 white victims were three employees – a tutor, and two shepherds. The eldest son of the family, William Fraser, had left some time previously with drays for Ipswich, 320 miles away. His 14-year-old brother, Sylvester, who had been knocked unconscious, soon recovered but lay hidden under his bed, listening as his mother and sisters were abused and slaughtered. Then, after the intruders had left about sunrise, Sylvester escaped to a neighbouring station and raised the alarm. In the retribution by the Native Mounted Police and settlers of the Upper Dawson and other districts, at least 150 Aborigines died; the total may have been 300. The long-term effect on the Jiman was the destruction of their society; the long-term effect on the Fraser brothers, William and Sylvester, was one of unremitting failure as colonists, and yet their story has become Queensland legend. Their revenge against the Jiman, without prosecution, helped to set the pattern for white attitudes and colonial government policy towards the Aborigines of Queensland for the next 40 years.

The basic facts of the Hornet Bank massacre are fairly well known, although recent research has shown that previous accounts have all been inaccurate in at least some detail and some popular accounts have been grossly inaccurate even in fundamental points. It is not intended here to reconstruct the massacre and events leading up to it, because

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Mr. Reid, a student at the Australian National University, Canberra, has researched the inter-relation of these massacres as part of his thesis for a Master degree this year.

they are dealt with separately.[1] Instead, this paper will trace the movements of Aboriginal bands after the attack on Hornet Bank in order to show that at least one band appears to have participated in the massacre of the Wills party at Cullin-la-Ringo station on the Nogoa River, four years later. It will be shown that the two surviving Fraser brothers, William and Sylvester, participated in the white revenge after the latter outrage. Also, the lessons which can be learnt from a study of the two massacres will be discussed.

The first contact made by any whites with the attackers occurred late on the day following the massacre, when Second-Lieutenant Walter Powell, who had taken charge of the Upper Dawson detachment of the Native Police after the suspension of Second-Lieutenant Thomas Ross in September, heard of the attack. His troopers soon picked up tracks leading westwards from Hornet Bank. Having assumed that Sylvester was dead, the Aborigines in this band apparently believed that they were in no immediate danger. Before sunset on 28 October they camped in an open space near a gorge through which the Dawson River flows about 10 miles west of Hornet Bank. Once inside the gorge they could expect to be safe. As they were preparing to settle down for the night, the Native Police attacked, killing five and wounding several others. The remainder fled into the scrub and probably into the gorge. The Police retrieved about 100 sheep which the band had taken from Hornet Bank station and some European weapons. But over the next 10 days Powell did not again make contact with Aborigines.[2]

Two points are significant in Powell's report: that he encountered a band moving westwards and that this was the only one in 10 days. It is not clear where else he searched in that time, but if he stayed in the rugged country to the west of Hornet Bank, it is almost certain this band was the only one which moved westwards after the attackers, believed to have numbered about 100, dispersed. An Aboriginal band normally comprises between 20 and 30 persons, including old men, women and children; this means that in a band of as many as 30 probably no more than 10 fighting men would be available. This in turn suggests about 10 bands were involved in the attack. Where did the other nine go? The available evidence suggests they moved southwards, south-eastwards, eastwards and also northwards along the Dawson River.

The Scott family at Hornet Bank station in the 1880s. The main house at the time of the massacre is the second from the right, the one on the right not having been built at that time. The kitchen and the tutor's room were in the small building third from the right. (Oxley Lib. photo).

A Dulacca squatter, John Ferrett, believed that the Hornet Bank attackers came from his district. They had frequented the police barracks at Wondai Gumbul near Dulacca and had become daring in the presence of the Native Police because of the mismanagement of the officers there.[3] If Ferrett was correct, then the Mandandanji of the area between Miles and Roma appear to have participated in the Fraser murders.

William Fraser returned to the Upper Dawson on 12 November and was with Powell when his detachment attacked Aborigines collected near Taroom station, now Carrabah station, east of Hornet Bank on 27 November. Three Aboriginal men and three women were killed and the remainder dispersed.[4] Second-Lieutenant Robert Walker joined forces with them in an attack on another group of Aborigines at Juandah station (near Wandoan) a few days later. Seven Aborigines were killed there, although C. J. Royds of Juandah station later said that these Aborigines were not involved in the Hornet Bank outrage.[5] Fraser, Powell and Walker were then involved in the killing of 11 other Aborigines possibly near Cockatoo station, farther to the east.[6] Fraser claimed to have identified possessions taken from Hornet Bank

and to have recognised some of the Aborigines as persons always in the neighbourhood of that station.

One of the bands which attacked Hornet Bank was believed to have come from the Baking Board district, just west of Chinchilla, and to have returned there. This band left a track along a creek leading towards Redbank station on the Auburn River, but then doubled back towards Baking Board to the south. The police following them were misled. They arrived at Redbank, discovered a band of Aborigines encamped near the station, and despite the protests of the Ross family, rounded them up, took them away and killed most.[7]

SETTLERS CLOSE TO PANIC

Settlers in the Auburn and Burnett districts were becoming alarmed by the number of Upper Dawson Aborigines who were appearing in their districts. William Wiseman, the Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Leichhardt district, reported on 8 December that the more-than-ordinary activity of the squatters and Native Police in pursuing them had forced them "inwards" towards the settled districts, where they would "lie about in security till a more favourable period".[8] Phillip Lamb of Rocky Springs on the Auburn wrote on 3 December to his brother in Sydney that the blacks in his district were harbouring the Dawson tribe who had been committing atrocities equalled only by those of the Sepoys in India.[9] It was strongly rumoured that the Dawson blacks would attack another station soon.

Squatters in the Upper Dawson were now in a state near to panic. George Pearce Serocold of Cockatoo Creek station claimed that if no active measures were immediately adopted by the Government there would be a squatters' crusade as soon as the shearing was finished. In one year, he pointed out, 20 people had been murdered on the Upper Dawson, the population of which did not exceed 180 whites.[10] Early in December the crusade began. A party of several squatters from Bungaban and Cockatoo stations in the Upper Dawson, and from Dykehead, Auburn and Hawkwood stations on the Auburn assembled at Hawkwood and, with some of their employees and two Moreton Bay Aborigines as trackers, set out to destroy groups of Aborigines before they could attack again.

During six weeks these vigilantes dispersed several camps of Aborigines along the Auburn and eastwards across the Burnett district. They found personal effects of the Frasers in at least one of the camps. It was estimated later that they killed 80 Aborigines, who they claimed were Dawson blacks, identifiable because of a distinctive boomerang-shaped marking on their chests.[11] This action forced the Upper Dawson Abor-

igines even farther eastwards. Some were seen as far east as C. R. Haly's Taabinga station on the Burnett and Witheron station 15 miles east of Gayndah.[12]

The deep penetration of the Auburn and Burnett districts by the Upper Dawson people (commonly called the Jiman, although this name is not convincingly established) shows that they had strong cultural relations with the tribes of these areas. Linguistic research by John Mathew early this century and by Nils M. Holmer only recently shows that there was a linguistic grouping of tribes dominated by the Kabi Kabi of the Wide Bay district and the Wakka Wakka of the Burnett.[13] On the evidence of band movements after the Hornet Bank attack it appears that the Upper Dawson people were part of the Wakka Wakka western division of this linguistic grouping, which may also have included the Mandandanji of the Condamine around Dulacca, the Barunggam of the Chinchilla-Dalby district, the Goreng Goreng of the Northern Burnett and possibly the Wulili of the Middle Dawson. If this is so, then we know who attacked Hornet Bank. It was a confederation of tribes, which some time before had decided to make a concerted attack on a station selected for several reasons, including its isolation and vulnerability. The objective was to begin a campaign of terror which would drive the whites out of the frontier districts.

There remains one other movement of the attackers away from Hornet Bank to consider – that is, northwards along the Dawson. Soon after the Fraser murders, Aborigines gathered at Joseph Thompson's Camboon station (near Theodore) but were dispersed by Second-Lieutenant Robert Walker on his way from Rockhampton to the Upper Dawson. Sub-Lieutenant F. W. Carr, who had been stationed on the Lower Dawson at the time of the attack, brought up his detachment from Banana station, arriving on 2 December at Rawbelle station 50 miles east of the Dawson and about the same distance north of Redbank. The squatter, Berry, was in great dread of attack from Aborigines encamped nearby. Carr's detachment dispersed them, killing three.[14]

In January 1858, 200 to 300 Aborigines unsuccessfully attempted to ambush Wiseman and his party at night on the road from Rannes station to the Archers' Gracemere station (near Rockhampton). Wiseman claimed that a great many of this party had come from the Upper Dawson and very probably many were implicated in the massacre of the Fraser family and had moved northwards to escape from the Native Police and whites pursuing them there. No Fitzroy River blacks were with them, he said, as they spoke an entirely different tongue

from all those near Rannes. This group had been on Rannes run just before Christmas, killing sheep and robbing shepherds' huts. Six months after the Hornet Bank massacre, the Dawson was still not "quiet"; two Chinese and two Englishmen being killed on Camboon station in April 1858. The attackers then went to Banana station, where they attacked three white men who fought them off. In July 1858 50 to 60 Aborigines attacked Henry Gregory's Gwambagwyne station north of Taroom. The police followed them for six days northwards before losing them.[15] The guerilla war continued for about 18 months as the frontier moved northwards and westwards away from Hornet Bank, to which some sort of peace and accommodation with the events of 27 October 1857 came at last.

In the four years after the Hornet Bank massacre, the Aboriginal people of the Upper Dawson had either moved out of the area or had succumbed to conquest and become "station blacks" as they were "let in" to the stations now established in their homelands. Some who had not capitulated had moved northwards along the Dawson and appear to have been there still during the first half of 1861, in the area between the Dawson, Mackenzie and Comet Rivers.

BREAKING THE HOSTILE LINE

Squatters in search of new runs had been moving into this district after breaking through the forbidding Dawson line of hostile tribes and brigalow scrubs. One of the earliest runs in this district was Bauhinia Downs, occupied by Charles and Henry Dutton. From the outset they had had good relations with the local tribe, among whom now in 1861 lived some people from the Upper Dawson. The Duttons' kindness was noted by Oscar De Satge, whose brother Henry was at this time on the neighbouring Albinia Downs station on the Comet. The Duttons, De Satge said, were friends of the Aborigines and "warm protectors from anything like cruelty and injustice".[16] The Duttons, however, were almost alone among the whites in this new district in holding these sentiments, their only support coming from Frederick Walker, the former Native Police Commandant, then living at Nulalbin near the junction of the Dawson and Fitzroy Rivers.

The Queensland Attorney-General, Ratcliffe Pring, had made a strong speech in the Legislative Assembly, declaring that it was the duty of the magistrates to protect the Aborigines as much as the Europeans in the colony. This had inspired Walker to write to Pring asking: ". . . of what use are such truisms, when it is notorious that they are ignored in practice?" He alleged that a "native of the Colony of Victoria" named Tahiti, who had faithfully served the Government for

eight years, had been murdered and after a delay of 10 months, the Government having ordered an inquiry, William Wiseman, a magistrate, had instituted a "mock enquiry" and "did his utmost to screen the murderers". Walker objected to Aborigines being treated as aliens in their own lands. It appears his attitude was that although the whites had a right to conquer the Aborigines, the Aborigines, as the original inhabitants, also had rights which should be recognised and honoured by the Government.[17]

Incidents involving the Duttons and the Native Police demonstrate the great potential for further disaster still remaining on the Central Queensland frontier. After the shearing on Albinia Downs had been completed in the summer of 1860-61, Aborigines on the station had left it; but a month later about 30 strangers, heavily armed and unaccompanied by their women, appeared at the kitchen door at sunrise and demanded of a white woman that she give them a sheep hanging there. Second-Lieutenant A.M.G. Patrick, then staying with his troopers at Albinia Downs, ordered them away. Later he and his troopers went to the two out-stations to check them and encountered about 70 warriors. It was reported that Patrick had ordered them to go further from the head-station but they had attacked the police.[18]

Charles Dutton wrote to Morisset about the behaviour of Patrick, who claimed he was "quietly riding along" when he was attacked. Dutton alleged the circumstances were such as to require an investigation. Further, he said, since Patrick had returned from the Comet he had made his camp about two miles from Bauhinia Downs and this had led to more trouble with the local Aborigines. In accordance with Morisset's wishes in the past, the Aborigines had been moved from Bauhinia Downs, but when the police had left the district to go to Albinia Downs and the Comet, Dutton had invited the Aborigines to return so they could receive some tomahawks he had promised them. The drays with the tomahawks had not arrived, but Dutton permitted the Aborigines to wait.[19]

On Sunday 17 March, Patrick arrived with his troopers and asked Dutton whether he had allowed the Aborigines up to his place. When Dutton replied affirmatively, Patrick asked "in a dictatorial tone" whether he intended to turn them out when the drays came. Dutton replied he did. Patrick then went to the camp about 100 yards from the house. Some of the blacks were frightened and asked Dutton to intervene. More words were exchanged between Patrick and Dutton, and when Dutton declared he would use his discretion as to whether he would turn out the Aborigines, Patrick, "in a state of maniacal excitement", ordered his troopers to unsling their carbines and drive them out. Two or three of the troopers obeyed, but those Aborigines who

could run were out of sight in the nearby scrub in a moment. Patrick gathered such spears and waddies as he could find, saying his orders were to disperse armed mobs. This "armed mob" consisted of eight able-bodied men and 17 women, children and cripples.[20]

In his letter to Morisset, Dutton said: "Here were a small lot of peaceable blacks who came in at my request to receive a gift of tomahawks and blankets, were rushed out of their camp by the police, threatened with shooting if they dared to stand, their implements of chase carried off and destroyed . . .". Dutton found Patrick's actions repugnant. "These creatures", he warned, "wretched and debased and brutal as they are, have still one feeling in common with whites . . . that of deep implacable revenge for unprovoked injury."[21]

Apparently Patrick had little control over his men. When criticised because of their indifference to his orders, he remarked it would not do to check them too often as they would give him deadly looks and were ugly customers to deal with. In Dutton's opinion, Patrick had done his best to inflame the district. He was apprehensive about the consequences of Patrick's heavy-handed methods towards the Aborigines, informing Morisset that ". . . the occurence on the Comet is fearfully dangerous to all." Patrick's actions had perhaps created an "evil that no principle of justice, no intelligence, no severity can suppress".[22]

Frederick Walker later said he knew of only one case in which a magistrate had successfully resisted the slaughter of "the unoffending Blacks"; this was Charles Dutton of Bauhinia Downs. Walker also said that Henry Dutton had threatened the Native Police officer involved with a revolver. Henry Dutton had "made use of the only argument that could have succeeded and saved the station from being polluted by another crime".[23]

"HUMANE" DEALINGS WITH TRIBES

Morisset considered Patrick, who had been appointed to the Force on 12 August 1860, to be not very promising but very steady. He thought that Patrick would be a "humane" man in his dealings with the natives.[24] Patrick's "humanity" towards the Aborigines appears to have been of the type displayed by the more severe officers of the Native Police. Early in 1861 he had complained to Charles Dutton that other officers had been able to bag their first Aborigine after only a few weeks in the Force; he had served for six months and still had not yet killed a black.[25] The Aborigines near Bauhinia often asked Dutton why they were shot at? They said they had not killed whitefellows nor killed sheep nor taken rations. There was no answer, Dutton told

Morisset, except that the Aborigines were black and must be shot.[26]

In April 1861 Henry De Satge at Albinia Downs wrote to Morisset saying Dutton had exaggerated Patrick's actions on the Comet.[27] But Frederick Walker also complained of Patrick's behaviour. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary in April 1861, he said that that officer had dispersed friendly Aborigines on Planet Creek, a tributary of the Comet River, at the beginning of March 1861. Also, Patrick had attacked, killed and wounded several others on Rolleston's station on the Comet. These latter Aborigines had been assisting a Mr. Sutton on the latter's run after his white servants had left him. Walker had heard of this attack on 4 March. He said the whole tribe was greatly excited and accused him and all Europeans of treachery. Since then a worse outrage had been committed at Charles Dutton's station. Walker called for the protection of these Aborigines in future or the result might be a collision between the settlers and the Native Police.[28]

Walker's complaint was referred to Lieutenant O'Connell Bligh, who replied from Rockhampton on 21 May that he had just returned from a tour of the Comet River and had received Patrick's report, which said some Aborigines without gins and fully armed had come to Rolleston's station on the Comet and demanded sheep. Realising the Native Police were there, they had gone away, followed by Patrick with the stated intention of preventing any outrage at the shepherds' huts. Coming upon a large number, he was attacked and compelled to fire in self-defence. Bligh said the neighbouring squatters, except Dutton, were not apprehensive about the consequences of Patrick's action.[29] By mid-1861 Patrick's relations with his own troopers were so bad that they deserted on Zamia Creek in the same area.[30]

No official action was taken on Dutton's complaint. He waited until the report of the 1861 Select Committee was released before writing again, this time to the Colonial Secretary, stating that he had been denied the opportunity to give evidence before the Select Committee. Also, he alleged that a most unjustifiable insinuation against his moral character had been made by a member of the Government. His letter implies that member was R. R. Mackenzie. All he wanted, he said, was to clear his name and to "secure to the Blacks in future a recognition of their rights as human beings, which the whole conduct of the Native Police has ignored".[31]

WILLS' PARTY ON THE NOGOA

Dutton's warnings of future trouble were in vain. As he was writing his letter of 10 September, Horatio Spenser Wills, a wealthy squatter from the Wimmera District of Victoria who had little knowledge of northern frontier conditions, was bringing a large party of employees

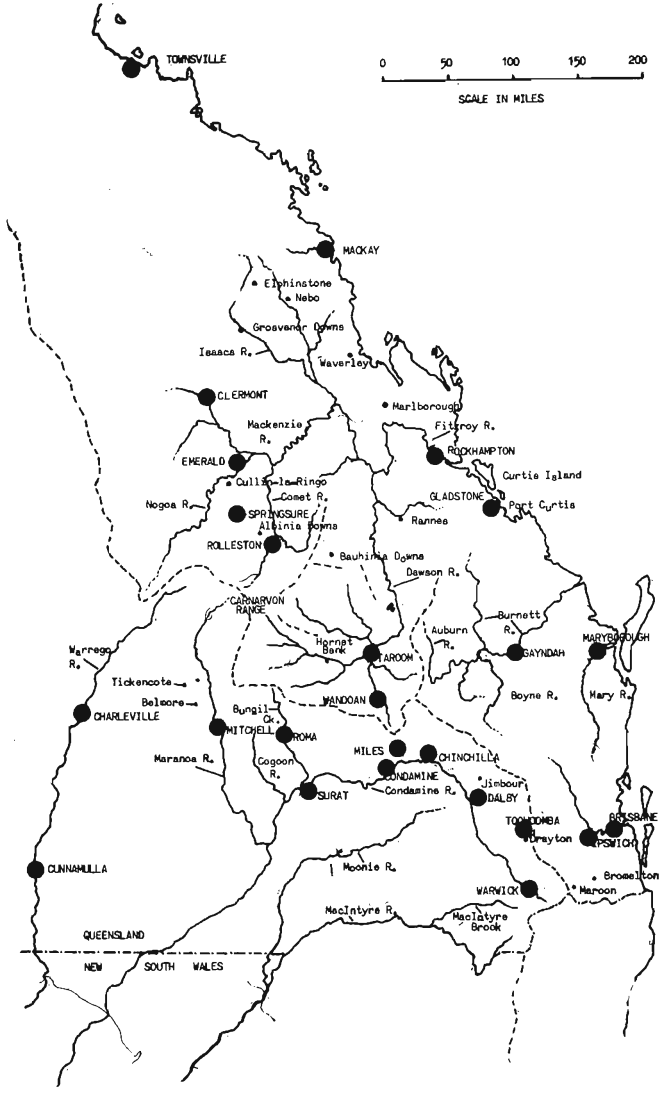
and their families northwards to establish a new run on the Nogoa River, 55 miles north-west of Albinia Downs. Several other runs had already been established near the Nogoa including Rainworth, occupied in June that year by Jesse Gregson. After stopping at Albinia Downs, Wills early in October reached his new run, Cullin-la-Ringo, just over 20 miles north of Rainworth, in the land of the Kairi people. Wills intended to treat them with kindness and friendship and allowed them to approach his camp while his employees went about establishing the station. If he had been told of an incident involving Patrick, Gregson and the Kairi of the district before he arrived, he apparently placed no importance upon it.

Gregson had sailed from England in 1855 and worked for Dr. Trail at Collaroy station near Casilis in the western New England district, first as a station hand and then as overseer. The neighbouring station was held by A. and V. Busby, who had selected Rainworth, and Gregson was engaged to establish this new station. Gregson started from Casilis in May 1860, overlanding 5000 ewes and reaching Albinia Downs early next year. *On 24 June 1861* he camped for the first time on Rainworth, named after a nearby hill in turn named by Augustus Gregory during an exploring expedition. As soon as Gregson's drays reached the camp he gave the Kairi to understand that they must keep clear, which "they did good-humouredly enough". They had been burning grass by the creek but, on being asked to beat out the flames, they did so.[32]

About a fortnight after Gregson's arrival, a detachment of the Native Police under Patrick arrived and camped near his party. On the following morning Gregson found that some of his sheep were straggling into camp and realised that they must have been "dropped" by a shepherd. Three hundred were missing. With Patrick and his troopers, Gregson and his men began to search and soon found the sheep in the charge of a band of Aborigines who, he said, were driving them into a patch of thorny scrub on a steep stony point of a ridge.

> Dismounting, we went up the ridge on foot to dislodge them and a brush took place. Subsequently Mr. Patrick told me that I had shot him in the leg, and true enough a bullet from my revolver had reached him, though as I was in advance it could only have done so by glancing from one of the rocks. He remained with me for some days and then left for Rockhampton where I believe the bullet was extracted.[33]

A few years later a young Aboriginal stockman gave a different account of the incident to Tom Wills, a son of Horatio Wills, while riding together on Cullin-la-Ringo. The stockman said that when



Map showing the geographical locations of Hornet Bank and Cullin-la-Ringo.

some of the local people found Gregson's sheep wandering they assumed the whites had "thrown them away" and felt free to help themselves. They took the sheep back to their camp where they killed some and were preparing for a feast when Gregson arrived with the

police. Believing that they had done nothing wrong, they took no defensive action and allowed the police to approach. Without explanation, the police and Gregson charged the camp, firing as they came. Nonetheless the Aborigines held their ground. In the melee that followed, some troopers were dragged from their horses and Gregson accidentally shot Patrick in the leg, forcing the police to retire. The Kairi also retired, taking with them into the bush two wounded who soon died. According to the stockman, a conference was held and a decision taken to seek revenge. Runners were sent over the neighbouring countryside, and Aborigines answered the call, some coming from great distances. They congregated at Separation Creek, the boundary between Rainworth and Cullin-la-Ringo, so many that, according to the stockman, they were everywhere like ants. He explained that the local tribe had not been able to distinguish between Gregson and Wills: they dressed alike and rode about together and so the Aborigines assumed the two men were brothers and therefore one was as responsible for the injustice done to them as the other.[34]

Tom Wills had gone from Cullin-la-Ringo with two men to pick up some loading which had been left at Albinia Downs on the way northwards. On the night of 16 October 1861 the moon was at the full. The weather had been very warm. In the heat of the next morning about 60 Aborigines casually entered the Wills camp and watched proceedings; they showed no hostility and soon left. By lunch time the whole camp was fatigued and, after a meal, most of the whites were having a siesta. Some distance away under a tree, a shepherd, John Moore, dozed with his sheep. Now Aborigines just as casually returned and infiltrated the camp. Taking up positions, they struck so quickly that most whites died without a fight. Wills managed to fire one shot from a revolver; his overseer, Baker, and two men putting up a yard a mile-and-a-half away fought hard for their lives with tent-poles. The shepherd, John Moore, hearing the uproar, was able to crawl away among a flock of sheep until he was out of sight; then he ran to Rainworth. Two other shepherds farther from the scene also escaped the massacre.[35]

When Moore arrived at Rainworth next morning, Gregson was shearing. At once Gregson organised a party and set out for Cullin-la-Ringo, arriving late that night with nine shearers. "The bodies of men, women and children were lying in positions and attitudes which showed, as the shepherds had supposed, they had all been killed on the instant without any struggle on the part of the men." The two other shepherds, Edward Kenny and Patrick Mahoney, had now appeared. In no case, Gregson found, had the victims been mutilated. He said that 22

or 23 were killed,[36] but the actual death toll was 19 in the worst massacre of whites in Australian history.

"PURSUED AND PUNISHED"

When Tom Wills returned, Gregson left him in charge at Cullin-la-Ringo and, getting together a party of neighbours including Patten, Thomson, Macintosh and Richards and their employees, set out in pursuit. They came upon a camp of hundreds at daybreak. The resulting clash was inconclusive, the whites being forced to retreat when the Aborigines realised they had left their horses to approach the camp.[37] As soon as the massacre had been reported, police magistrate John Jardine despatched Sub-Lieutenant William Cave and troopers leading remounts and carrying 300 ball cartridges with instructions to rendezvous with the white party who numbered 10. They carried rations for six weeks.[38] Oscar De Satge, who heard of the massacre from Richards' son a few days after it happened, says that after Cave arrived with the Native Police "the murderers of the Wills party were thoroughly pursued and punished for their misdeeds".[39]

Tom Wills stayed on at Cullin-la-Ringo as station manager, returning to Victoria in 1864. He had lost only his father in the massacre, the other members of the family not yet having made the journey northwards. He seems to have borne no ill-will towards Aborigines. A first-class cricketer, he was appointed coach of the Aboriginal cricket team at Edenhope in the Wimmera district and captained the Aboriginal team which played against a white team at Melbourne Cricket Ground on Boxing Day 1866 and then at other Victorian centres before playing in Sydney and a few N.S.W. provincial centres in 1867. He was a heavy drinker, and D. J. Mulvaney writes that: "Alcohol ruined his career and led to his tragic suicide in 1880."[40]

On his arrival at the police barracks in the Upper Dawson on 7 November 1861, Bligh, now Native Police Commandant, received confirmation of the massacre. He had heard a rumour of it on the Maranoa and had brought with him Second-Lieutenant William Moorhead and six troopers, whom he proposed to take to the Nogoa where they would be deployed for the additional protection of the frontier. He moved George Murray, younger brother of John Murray who had recently been dismissed from the force, from the Upper Dawson to the acting command of the First Division at Rockhampton, leaving the Upper Dawson unprotected until Moorhead could be recalled after two months on the Nogoa. Commenting on Cullin-la-Ringo, Bligh said that such a wholesale massacre could not have taken place if the blacks had been kept out of the station altogether. As it was, he said,

> they saw the defenceless condition of the whites (so great was the late unfortunate gentleman's confidence in the Blacks that not one of his numerous firearms was served out to his men, or even unpacked from the case in which they reached the station) and took the first opportunity after maturing their plans, of killing the whole of them.
>
> It is a well-known fact among the Squatters on this River that no murders were committed at any station where the Blacks were entirely kept out. Upon these precedents, I have instructed Second-Lieutenant Moorhead and the officer with him not to allow any Blacks to remain at the Stations in their District, but to send them away without violence if possible, that is to say except in self-defence.

Bligh anticipated considerable opposition from the Duttons and Frederick Walker, but being convinced that no other course would secure the safety of life and property, he trusted that he might receive the support of the Government in carrying out the system.[41] There were other opponents at this time; the "church party" was protesting against the Queensland Government's methods of keeping the depredations of the Aborigines in check.[42] This party comprised certian clergymen and a few philanthropic squatters.

Some writers have claimed the Wills party murders led to "the greatest punitive expedition in pioneering history . . . Hundreds of blacks were slaughtered."[43] This may be true, but it is not clear from the sources; nor is it fully clear what official and unofficial forces carried out this punishment.

In his despatch to London on the massacre, Governor Bowen said about 100 "fighting men" took part. Subsequently "an uncontrolled desire for revenge took possession of each heart". Thirty Aborigines were said to have been killed by a party of 11 whites. Then Sub-Lieutenant Cave, who had been sent 200 miles to the scene with troopers, pursued the Aborigines for four days. When he came upon them, several were killed and the remainder retreated to a hill, the front of which was almost perpendicular. Some fell from the top in their attempts to escape the police. Bowen remarked that an estimated 70 Aborigines had been killed in retaliation for the Cullin-la-Ringo massacre.[44]

Apart from Bligh's intention to send Moorhead to the Nogoa for two months, there is no further official mention of his movements there. According to an official history of the Native Police, George Murray, known as "Black Murray" because of his flowing black beard, arrived at the police camp at Rainworth with a detachment of troopers

on 26 October, only nine days after the massacre. His force "shot a large number of aboriginals and recovered firearms and other property which had been stolen from Cullin-la-Ringo".[45]

George Murray made a much more successful career in law-enforcement than his brother John. George Pulteney Malcolm Murray was born in Dunfriesshire, Scotland, in 1837, went with his parents when five years of age to New South Wales, moved to Moreton Bay when 17 and joined the Native Police as a sub-lieutenant when 20. He was in the Upper Dawson district as early as July 1858, and in 1860 was the officer-in-charge of the barracks at Robinson's Creek and so would have been well-known to the Frasers. James Nisbet, who also knew him there, described him as an "excellent, judicious officer who throughout his long and varied services in the North won and deserved the respect and esteem of those with whom he came in contact." Nisbet added: "Without his (and others') services in the early days it would have been almost impossible for the settlers to have remained on their holdings in that country."[46] Murray was described as "active and untiring, always in the saddle; without exercising needless severity, he showed the blacks that in the most rugged of their haunts his men could follow and surprise them."[47] He was credited with "going to Springsure and soon made this area as safe as the Darling Downs".[48]

EVIDENCE OF INVOLVEMENT

There is some reason to believe that the Jiman and the Fraser brothers were involved in the Cullin-la-Ringo massacre and its aftermath. It was alleged early this century that the Jiman took part, according to C. L. D. Hamilton who got his information from Jimmy Reid of Camboon, a member of "a mid-Dawson tribe" adjoining the Jiman.[49] Camboon is in the tribal area of the Wululi, according to Tindale's map. His information is supported by a contemporary evidence from I. Downes Wood. In his letter to the Queensland Chief Secretary in March 1862, Wood remarks that he had heard that certain of the ringleaders at Hornet Bank, who had escaped the Native Police, were at the Nogoa massacre. He said they were last heard of at Charley's Creek near "Jingi".[50] Wood was referring to Charley's Creek which flows through Chinchilla to the Condamine River and to Jinghi Jinghi, a small centre 30 miles east of Chinchilla. This claim, if true, confirms a connection between Hornet Bank and Cullin-la-Ringo. Also, it shows that the Aboriginal people involved in Hornet Bank ranged over great distances and that one group at least came from the area between the Condamine and the Great Divide and between a point just west of Chinchilla to at least 30 miles east.

The only documentary evidence of the Fraser brothers' involvement in the Cullin-la-Ringo aftermath comes from the story of Benjamin Rayner, who died aged 79 at Hodgson near Roma on 2 October 1917. Born at Ellisborough near Aylesbury, England in 1838, Rayner arrived in Moreton Bay in 1856 and went to Ipswich where he worked for some time before going with sheep to Dulacca and then droving to the Edwards River, southern N.S.W. Eventually he returned to Ipswich where he was engaged by R. Spencer to go with cattle to Denison Creek, a tributary of the Isaacs River at the back of Mackay. An article written by "Ben Bolt", based on Rayner's diary and published in the *Australian Pastoralist Grazing Farmers' and Selectors' Gazette* in 1927, continues the story:

> There was the usual number of men, and the party included a young couple named Ready, who were travelling some part of the way with Mr. Wills, who was going out with a staff of men, women and children to found Cullin-la-Ringo station on the Comet. Mr. Wills thought that with kindness and patience he could placate the blacks, who were beginning to become very troublesome at the time the parties parted company. The sorrowful sequel told a different tale. One morning an old man staggered into the camp and all that could be got out of him was 'all dead'. Ben's camp mustered all hands and sent for help. Arriving at Cullin-la-Ringo, a gruesome sight met their gaze – seventeen men, women and children lay there, butchered by the blood-thirsty black murderers. The party determined to show no mercy, and they didn't. Among the members of the punitive force were the Fraser brothers, the only two survivors of the Hornet Bank massacre of 1859 [sic], who had a bitter score to wipe out. Superintendent Perry, with a posse of black trackers then arrived, and if they did not help in the 'dispersal', they held the telescope to the wrong eye while the Frasers got even.[51]

This evidence is reasonably plausible, despite small factual errors. At the time of Cullin-la-Ringo, Rayner was close to the Frasers, who were then on Grosvenor Downs station on the Isaacs, William having selected the run in June 1860. Getting up a revenge party on the Isaacs and riding to the Nogoa almost immediately after the massacre was possible. The distance was only about 130 miles and the Frasers had already shown that they could manage such a ride in a day. That such parties did travel from far afield to Cullin-la-Ringo is corroborated by James Nisbet, who was a member of one which rode from Ghinghinda station in the Upper Dawson and arrived in time to "clean up" after the massacre.[52] Ghinghinda is about the same distance as Grosvenor Downs

from Cullin-la-Ringo. "Superintendent Perry" is apparently a reference to George Murray, who reached a senior rank in the Native Police before becoming a police magistrate. The article does not actually say that Rayner was a member of the party which went to Cullin-la-Ringo from the Isaacs, but even if he did not he would have heard, when the party returned, of the Frasers' participation.

The overall evidence is thin, but it does appear that there were at least these two connections between Hornet Bank and Cullin-la-Ringo. There is no doubt that some of the attackers of Hornet Bank moved either voluntarily or compulsorily northwards along the Dawson – the evidence of Wiseman and Carr demonstrates that. It is possible also that the later activities of the Native Police, particularly those involving Second-Lieutenant Patrick in 1861, forced at least some of these Upper Dawson people westwards towards first the Comet and then the Nogoa Rivers. The provocation suffered by the Aborigines in the Comet and Nogoa districts culminated in the attack by Patrick and Gregson on or near Rainworth station against supposed sheep-stealers. The massacre of the Wills party on the Nogoa was the inevitable expression of black justice.

George Murray was back in Rockhampton when William Cave, now a second-lieutenant, wrote to him from the Comet and Nogoa River barracks on 28 October 1862. Cave reported that apart from one small incident near the junction of Springsure Creek with the Comet, in which he "was compelled to fire on them, to disperse them", he had seen few Aborigines during his recent patrol of the district. Most, if not all, of the Aborigines fired upon belonged to the eastern side of the Expedition Range, which means they came from the mid-Dawson. On searching their camp he found unmistakeable signs that they had participated in some outrage, as he found many things taken from whites, such as a pair of girths, a pair of scissors and other sundry articles, all of which he destroyed. Generally, however, the district was quiet.[53]

Wood had another comment on Hornet Bank which should be noted. He pointed out that because the women at Cullin-la-Ringo were not raped and those at Hornet Bank were, it appeared the reason for the attack on Hornet Bank was revenge for sexual transgressions by the whites there.[54] This is an over-simplification, the reasons for the Hornet Bank attack being complex, but it shows that Wood was using his knowledge of tribal justice to ascertain the cause of an Aboriginal "outrage". He may have been the first European in Australia to have related forensic evidence to tribal law in order to understand the cause of a particular black and white conflict.

Like Wood, we can use Cullin-la-Ringo to draw conclusions about Hornet Bank. Firstly, the whites had learnt nothing from the lesson of the first disaster; the official policy of dispersal of Aborigines who resisted white incursions into their hunting grounds continued unchecked, and after Queensland's separation from New South Wales was strengthened by official sanction. Secondly, the "innocent" victims at the second disaster were no more innocent than those of the first; the Aboriginal justice system required that all members of a family were equally responsible for the crimes of an individual member; therefore, even if the Frasers had done the Jiman no injustice, they were just as culpable as the Wills party for the crimes of the whites and the colonial government. Thirdly, after both massacres, terrible revenge was exacted on the supposed murderers by the whites on a scale which borders on genocide; at least one tribe was decimated and doomed to extinction.

The road from Hornet Bank to Cullin-la-Ringo had been long and roundabout, and at the end the whites learned nothing about black and white relationships. For them, the second disaster merely confirmed popular beliefs that the Aborigines were savage and treacherous; they did not seem to understand that attacking a band of Aborigines who had taken charge of a few sheep which they thought the whites had "thrown away" was just as savage and treacherous. In those days, devastating punishment seemed to be the ready answer to most problems which the whites had in their relations with the Aborigines. For the Aborigines there was only one choice: submit to conquest or fight. At Hornet Bank and Cullin-la-Ringo they tried to commit outrages so horrifying that the whites would withdraw from their land. But the "greed for land" which Oscar de Satge had noted then was too strong to deter the whites.[55] The frontier moved northwards and westwards and there were more conflicts, so many that Henry Reynolds has estimated that at least 5000 and possibly 15,000 Aborigines died in the period 1840 to 1890.[56] The road from Hornet Bank to Cullin-la-Ringo led on to the Palmer River in the 1870's and the Selwyn Ranges in the 1880's, then to the government reserves, created after the Aborigines Protection and Restriction on the Sale of Opium Act 1897 as the final solution to these problems. If that road leads anywhere today, perhaps it leads us back through the same country from the Macintyre northwards, but hopefully we have different attitudes now and a greater readiness to learn the lessons along the way.

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33. Gregson, memoirs, pp.41-51.
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